

Validation of the Effectiveness of Support for School Non-attendees in Tokyo's Social Worker Utilization Project : Based on the Comparison of Teachers and Other Social Welfare Projects

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都内スクールソーシャルワーカー活用事業による 長期欠席者へのサポートの効果の検証 : 教師拡充や社会福祉事業等の比較を踏まえて

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要 約

本研究は、スクールソーシャルワーカー（以下、SSWr）活用事業を導入した都内48自治体において、長期欠席者（目的変数）がどの程度軽減するかという因果関係について、所持資格の種類（福祉、心理、教育等）、配置形態、子ども一人の予算規模や雇用時間、これらSSWr活用事業に関する因子の他、生活保護の教育扶助受給率、児童扶養手当受給率、民生児童委員の活動平均数、子ども一人に対する教員数（いずれも説明変数）より検証することを目的とする。結果として、中学生においてソーシャルワーカー資格所持者のSSWrの活用の影響が認められた。教員、生活保護ケースワーカー、民生児童委員よりも寄与する可能性が示唆された。そもそもSSWrがこれらの子どもの環境となる機関同士をつないでいくこと、必要となる機関をつなぐことで、経済的効果以上の支援となり得ることが論じられた。

キーワード：長期欠席者、不登校、スクールソーシャルワーク、福祉的援助

1. Introduction

Starting in the academic year 2008, social workers with expertise in social welfare consultation and assistance, were introduced into the educational field nationwide through a commissioned research project. The school social worker utilization project (henceforth abbreviated as SSWr Project) focused on supporting

children indirectly (environmentally) through the formation of a network that supports children and schools. The budget temporarily declined after the introduction of the project, but it has again reached the level of the initial stage at about 1.5 billion yen. Further, each municipality has indicated a desire to increase the number of personnel to an extent that the desired personnel cannot be allocated (i.e., social

worker, social workers, school social worker, and school social workers, henceforth abbreviated as SWr, SWrs, SSWr or SSWrs).

One of the main tasks of SSWrs is to support students who are not attending school¹⁾. In academic year 2020, the number of school refusal was 196,127 and the number of long-term absentees was 287,747 at the compulsory education level. These numbers have been increasing continuously since 2012 despite the declining birthrate²⁾. The Act on Securing Educational Opportunities Equivalent to Ordinary Education at the Stage of Compulsory Education, promulgated in 2016, stipulates that the government must (endeavor to) take necessary measures to provide education opportunities for children who do not attend school, and provides a broad perspective on support for school non-attendance.

When school non-attendance decreased in academic year 2012, 784 SSWrs were introduced. When it then began to rise in 2013, 1,008 SSWrs were introduced (This was the information provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which had jurisdiction over SSWr project in 2019; henceforth abbreviated as MEXT). This occurred within five years of the introduction of SSWr project. However, no objective view of the effectiveness of SSWrs has been established. Given that the MEXT stated in 2017 that boards of education should issue policies for the SSWr project, and it has become common for boards of education to hire SWrs, such as social welfare workers, Since the recruitment criteria were shown in “the School Social Worker Utilization Project Implementation Guidelines”, by MEXT, in the 2017 academic year³⁾.

Sakai City, Osaka, reported decrease in children's issues due to an increase in the number of personnel and their placement closer to children in schools⁴⁾. It is predicted that the effects can be examined regarding “the placement of personnel close to children”, “personnel expenses (budgeted amount)”, and “the number of working hours of such personnel”. Additionally, in order to understand whether “increasing the number of teachers or external specialists is more effective”, a question had been

produced, although it is expected that the presence of more teachers will naturally contribute to the reduction of non-attendance.

There are, however, a variety of welfare agencies that support children and families in communities. For example, SSWrs engage in activities centering on schools, but the approach of livelihood protection case workers is centered on families, while that of district welfare commissioners, they are called “Welfare Volunteers” for local residents including children, is focused on communities. A variety of services also support families. For example, child-rearing allowances (financial support) is provided as support for low-income single parents. Comparing the support provided by these professionals and SSWrs can present macroscopic perspectives on the viewpoints from which community support should be provided, in connection with guidelines for the SSWr policies of boards of education.

Therefore, this study focuses on the 2012–2013 academic year, when the number of students who do not attend school (long-term absentees) increased, and aims to verify the causal relationship between the decrease of long-term absentees and the introduction of the SSWr project one year later in the 2013–2014 academic year. The hypotheses are that the long-term absenteeism rate was reduced in municipalities that implemented the SSWr project, and that it is more effective to deploy SWrs who have nationally recognized qualifications, to deploy them closer to schools, and to increase the number of personnel. In view of the fact that students are not recorded as school refusals in cases of economic distress or illness and in cases in which several factors overlap, and that there are gaps in the rate of school refusals for long-term absentees between municipalities, long-term absentees should be used as a variable.

It would be meaningful to examine the extent to which some of the municipalities that had introduced the SSWr project were able or unable to mitigate the increase in the number of students who did not attend school, including examining whether SWrs' qualification and specializations impact their contributions to support for school non-attendance.

2. Methodology

procedure: Tokyo Association of Certified Social Workers (survey content (1); distributed to the Boards of Education in Tokyo and not open to the public) conducted for 51 boards of education in Tokyo in 2012 and 2013, and of the 31 and 36 municipalities that responded (the former is for 2012, and the latter for 2013; the same applies below)^{5,6)}, the 29 and 34 municipalities remaining after subtracting two municipalities that were clearly difficult to analyze. However, information from the two municipalities was used in part for general matters. In addition, since the number of SSWr personnel did not change in one town from the 2016 survey response, it was assumed that there was no difference in the budget, and estimates were used. In addition, information from the 19 and 14 municipalities that did not introduce the project was added, resulting in 48 municipalities that were used as subjects.

Survey content: (1) Survey of SSWr project establishment for 2012 and 2013^{5,6)} : ① Year when SSWr project was introduced; ② Number of SSWrs and their qualifications (social worker, teacher's license, psychological qualification, etc.); ③ Amount of salary and working hours; ④ Type of assignment ("request-type," in which they are dispatched by the board of education on request from the school principal, for example; "visiting-type," in which they visit schools regardless of whether they are requested by the school principal, and the "base school placement-type", in which they are assigned to a school that is their base of activities and are also dispatched to neighboring schools; with multiple responses allowed), In this study, the visiting type and the base school placement type were few so that they were used in combination as "V/B-type".

(2) Public health administration statistics of the Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health for 2012 and 2013^{7,8)} : ① people receiving child-rearing allowance (by the Child Rearing Allowance Act); ② people receiving educational assistance (by the Public Assistance Act); ③ number of district welfare commissioners and their active days.

(3) Number of households and population of Tokyo Metropolitan Government according to the Basic Resident Register for 2012 and 2013^{9, 10)} : ① population 18 years or younger and ② population 7 to 15 years old. In this study, the population 0 to 18 years old includes the population of foreigners 19 years or younger, and the population aged 7 to 15 includes the population of foreigners aged 5 to 14. The educational assistance rate is from 7 to 15 years old because the assistance continues until the end of junior high school (within compulsory education), and the child support allowance is for children under 18 years old (20 years old for persons with disabilities) but deemed to include 18-year-olds so that the number of subjects between years was captured.

(4) Basic Survey of Tokyo Metropolitan Schools for 2013 and 2014^{11, 12)} : The number of students on May 1 in 2013 and 2014, and the number of long-term absentees at the end of the 2013 and 2014 academic years in municipalities in Tokyo were used.

Analysis: Multiple regression analysis using panel data (random-effects model) was performed using the statistical analysis software Stata15. In this case, the explanatory variables for the SSWr project were the assignment form (request-type, visiting-type, base school placement type and no assignment), personnel expenses per child, and hours of SSWr involvement per child by qualification (qualifications held: "SWr involvement time," if they are qualified as a social worker or mental-health social worker; "psychologist involvement time," if they hold qualification for psychology but do not have the above qualification; "teacher involvement time," if they hold a teacher's license but do not have the above qualification"; and "the other involvement time" (as welfare positions involvement time)), using the data from 2012–2013. Additionally, the educational assistant receipt rate, child-rearing allowance receipt rate, average number of activities per welfare commissioner, and number of regular teachers per child were added as comparison items. The effects of the project were then each moved one year later (the previous year is the explanatory

variable and the next year is the response variable: from 2012 to 2013; from 2013 to 2014) and the long-term absenteeism rates in the 2013–2014 academic year were applied as the response variables.

Ethics: Although this study did not obtain personal information, it has passed an ethics review, the approval number was 29-050-3, by the ethics committee of Teikyo Heisei University, which was the author's affiliated organization.

3. Results

Regarding the assignment form, in 2012, of the 28 municipalities, 25 assigned by dispatching on request-

type and 8 assigned by v/b type, while in 2013, of the 33 municipalities, 30 assigned by dispatching on request-type and 10 assigned by V/B-type, meaning that 3 times more municipalities chose request-type rather than V/B-type assignments (more than 20% had complex assignment forms).

The basic statistics of the SSWr project establishment survey are shown in Table 1. The findings indicate that total budgeted personnel expenses for SSWrs increased by more than 300,000 yen on average from 2012 to 2013. Regarding hourly wages according to qualifications held by SSWrs, those with psychological qualifications had the highest hourly rate, while those with teaching qualifications

Table 1. Results of basic statistics for each survey

		M ± SD 2012 (28 municipalities)	M ± SD 2013 (33 municipalities)
Average SSWr personnel expenses (¥)		3,903,824.285±2,475,119.968	4,247,308.48±2,709,276.191
SSWr personnel expenses per child (¥)		422.855±370.301	558.716±666.165
Average SSWr hourly wage (¥) * Converted to simple hourly wage	<u>SSWr- qualified</u>	2,357.633±1,370.247	2,354.859±1,239.380
	<u>Psychologist-qualified</u>	3,604.703±1,734.329	3,630.460±1,712.064
	<u>Teacher-qualified</u>	2,025.781±339.350	2,018.198±263.129
	<u>Other</u>	2,089.888±334.557	2,029.301±421.206
Average SSWr activity hours (hours) * Converted to SSWr if SSWr qualified	<u>SSWr- qualified</u>	1,490.174±681.998	1,814.611±837.089
	<u>Psychologist-qualified</u>	613.400±422.974	668.800±449.741
	<u>Teacher-qualified</u>	1,338.000±511.890	1,466.333±538.989
	<u>Other</u>	757.000±374.469	1,176.000±000.000
Educational assistance recipients (people)		309.729±428.284	306.125±418.482
Average educational assistance receipt rate (%)		1.536±0.863	1.508±0.839
Child-rearing allowance recipients (people)		1,553.375±1536.040	1,545.146±1,512.643
Average child-rearing allowance receipt rate (%)		4.331±1.158	4.300±1.135
Child welfare commissioners (people)		182.708±157.290	180.312±155.812
No. of days of child welfare commissioner activities (days)		27426.630±2,2428.360	27,042.810±21,893.850
Average no. of days of activities per child welfare commissioner (days)		155.335±20.768	155.997±21.711
No. of teachers (in main duties) (people)	<u>Elementary</u>	554.604±470.271	556.395±469.876
	<u>Junior high</u>	267.000±228.165	270.500±232.166
No. of teachers per child (incl. managers, etc.) (people)	<u>Elementary</u>	0.059±0.015	0.059±0.013
	<u>Junior high</u>	0.073±0.039	0.074±0.037
No. of children (people)	<u>Elementary</u>	10,148.210±9,253.633	10,139.100±9,199.647
	<u>Junior high</u>	4,209.250±3,882.713	4,247.208±3,930.570
		2013	2014
No. of children (people)	<u>Elementary</u>	10,139.100±9,199.647	10,682.319±9,605.046
	<u>Junior high</u>	4,247.208±3,930.570	4,474.085±4,170.503
No. of long-term absentees (people)	<u>Elementary</u>	80.240±67.317	86.907±80.727
	<u>Junior high</u>	150.583±143.893	157.604±161.971
Average long-term absenteeism rate (%)	<u>Elementary</u>	0.780±0.312	0.808±0.318
	<u>Junior high</u>	3.559±1.217	3.486±1.020

and those with other qualifications such as nursery teachers had lower hourly rates. However, those with a SWr qualification had the greatest activity time. The proportion of those paid child-rearing allowances was greater than those receiving educational aid. The average number of days of activities by district welfare commissioners remained unchanged over the two years. The number of teachers for each child was slightly higher in junior high schools than in elementary schools. In addition, the long-term absenteeism rate was more than four times higher in junior high school students.

Next, Table 2, which is for elementary school students, and Table 3, which is for junior high school students, show the results of the panel data analysis. The fitness of the models for elementary and junior high school students was observed (elementary school students: $\chi^2(11) = 62.32, p=0.000$; junior high school students: $\chi^2(11) = 75.88, p=0.000$). First, elementary school students did not show any effect of the introduction of the SSWr project (request type,

base/visit type), and a significantly positive effect was found only in the case of SSWrs who only held teaching qualifications. A negative effect, albeit not statistically significant, was also observed for SSWrs who held psychologist qualifications. In addition, there was a significant negative effect from the number of teachers per child. Although not statistically significant, the educational benefit receipt rate and the average quantity of activities of each district welfare commissioner had a negative impact.

Next, in the results for junior high school students, Compared to elementary school students, negative impacts of SSWrs in SWr qualification holders were significantly recognized. Furthermore, though it was very weaker than that for elementary school students, a significantly positive impact from personnel expenses per child was identified. Although not statistically significant, people qualified as psychologists were found to have a positive effect. There was also a significantly positive effect from the child-rearing allowance payment rate.

Table 2. Results of panel data analysis of the SSWr project for the long-term absenteeism rate of elementary school students

	Coef	SE	z
Request-type	0.082	0.069	1.19
visit -Base type	0.054	0.083	0.65
Personnel expenses per child	-0.000	0.000	0.12
SWr involvement time per child	0.258	0.277	0.93
Psychologist involvement time per child	-0.003	1.356	0.00
Teacher involvement time per child	1.552	0.667	2.32*
Other involvement time per child	1.546	1.011	1.53
Educational assistance receipt rate	-0.030	0.065	0.46
Child-rearing allowance receipt rate	0.081	0.051	1.57
Average quantity of activities per district welfare commissioner	-0.003	0.001	0.12
No. of teachers per child	-12.300	2.950	0.00***

* $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$ R-sq = 0.318, n = 96, 48 municipalities

Table 3. Results of panel data analysis of the SSWr project for the long-term absenteeism rate of junior high school students

	Coef	SE	z
Request type	-0.083	0.210	0.40
Base/visit type	-0.073	0.255	0.29
Personnel expenses per child	0.001	0.000	2.75**
SWr involvement time per child	-2.610	0.816	3.20***
Psychologist involvement time per child	2.752	4.147	0.66
Teacher involvement time per child	-0.294	1.995	0.15
Childcarer, etc. involvement time per child	-1.328	3.060	0.43
Educational assistance receipt rate	-0.098	0.191	0.52
Child-rearing allowance receipt rate	0.480	0.149	3.22***
Average quantity of activities per district welfare commissioner	-0.006	0.004	1.44
No. of teachers per child	-4.602	3.197	1.44

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, R-sq = 0.374, n = 96, 48 municipalities

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the variation in the expertise of SSWrs contributed to the unstable impact of the SSWr project on long-term absentees. The project was found to have no statistically significant effects on long-term absentees in neither elementary nor junior high schools. Further, SSWrs with teaching qualifications were found to have a positive effect on long-term absentees in elementary schools, but SSWrs with the SWr qualification were found to have a significantly negative effect in junior high schools. The impact of SSWr labor costs per child in junior high schools is also relevant. Some municipalities in Tokyo had mainly supported junior high school students because of the large number of problems they face, although the national data presented greater support for elementary school students. In addition, SSWrs who held a teacher's license were found to have focused on educational support like educational counselors, and may have shown a divergence from SWr-like involvement. In this sense, at present, employment of SWr qualification holders may be encouraged.

Although it was not statistically significant, the payment of educational assistance with interpersonal aid and the quantity of activities per district welfare commissioner had a negative impact of the project on long-term absentees in both elementary and junior high schools students. Further, the quantity of activities per district welfare commissioner was significant in elementary schools. The payment of the child-rearing allowance, which is solely a monetary benefit, was found to have a positive impact, which was statistically significant in junior high schools, and increasing the number of teachers had a negative impact, which was significant in elementary schools. Thus, it can be inferred that increasing the support provided by adults in schools and communities is more meaningful than indirect monetary benefits for children who do not attend school. The recent increase in the number of local child cafeterias and the growing number of local support spaces involving district welfare commissioners may demonstrate the great

significance of connections with the local community. However, concerns remain regarding difficulties in dealing with non-attendance among junior high school students with single parents with only financial support.

Further, the number of teachers working per child was slightly higher on long-term absentees in junior high schools than in elementary schools. In addition to the greater number of teachers in charge of teaching subjects in junior high schools, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education (2017) has assigned additional teachers to handle non-attendance in junior high schools since 1993 (to 86 schools in the 2017 academic year). This can thus be considered an impact of measures taken to prevent school non-attendance. However, the impact of increasing the number of teachers per child on school non-attendance students is more salient for elementary school students, and the difficulty in providing support for school non-attendance students in junior high schools, who are adolescents, also emerges here.

Based on the above conclusions, it could be found out that there is great value and significance in SSWrs, who link networks with agencies that show both negative and positive impacts even though not significant statistically. This is also related to the fact that increasing the number of teachers may reduce non-attendance by 12.3% for elementary school students. However, this benefit is over-budgeting and may not be realistic, as it implies that the number of teachers per pupil is increased by 1. It was suggested that SSWrs could provide support beyond the economic effect by connecting these children's environmental institutions and connecting the necessary institutions for children, families, and schools. Regarding the causal relationship of long-term absentee support in this study, it was also the result of the development of the SSWr project, and further verification was required.

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